



‘Dunk Inventor’ Dobbs wows Ignacio

By Joel Priest
Special to the Drum

As crazy as his life was becoming, the “Dunk Inventor” might have feared he was turning into a character from a 1994 movie: a flick, ironically, about a sport he’d not seriously undertaken but which would help save him from a visit to the undertaker.

In “Above the Rim,” the late rapper Tupac Shakur jabs at his on-screen brother: “Not even Nutso ever got that high! Least not playin’.”

“Nutso” appears as a plot har-binger; Shakur’s sibling “Shep” hears the ribbing after being spotted practicing in the dark against his invisible, departed opponent and friend.

But apparently he must have had good game; real-life Kenny Dobbs, as a youth not yet realizing the potential inherent in a vertical leap exceeding 40 inches, was headed that same direc-

tion. Not to the jersey of the 4A Independence (Glendale, Ariz.) Patriots in the prep ranks — he was kicked out — but to, well, not even Dobbs really knew for sure, versed in many levels of drugs and crime that had his own family living in danger in the city northwest of Phoenix, and Dobbs living in his car on death’s doorstep.

Youths in Ignacio heard the man’s life story, one taking the rags-to-riches tale of Depression-era “Cinderella Man” boxer James Braddock (made into a biopic starring Russell Crowe) to a much higher — and lower — level, at an IHS assembly on Friday, Feb. 10 from Dobbs himself. And they saw for themselves talent almost squandered, talent that has earned him accolades (including from magazines SLAM and DIME) as street-ball’s best slammer — a likely place he avoided through faith and by staying “above the rim.”



photo Suzi Richards/SU Drum

Kenny “The Dunk Inventor” Dobbs, stopped by the Southern Ute Reservation on Thursday Feb. 9 - Friday Feb. 10, to show his basketball skills and tell the story of how he struggled to grow up in a hard family situation. Many of Dobbs’ stops included the SunUte Community Center, Ignacio High School and the Boys and Girls Club of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe.



photo Joel Priest/Special to the Drum

“Dunk Inventor” Kenny Dobbs sets the basketball atop the hands of Trae Seibel, in line with Lady Bobcat freshman Sky Cotton and senior Nicole Burch, in preparation for a trick dunk. Dobbs shared his story and demonstrated his high-flying skills at the Ignacio High gym on Friday, Feb. 10. He plans to compete in the NBA All-Star Weekend 2012 in Orlando, Fla., later this year.

At halftime of the boys’ varsity game later that night, fans of both the Bobcats and visiting Mancos Blue Jays had to believe their own eyes as well. Once offered a chance to play at Glendale CC in the junior-college ranks after miraculously managing to graduate high school, now backed by Sprite and Nike, Dobbs gave locals a preview of his upcoming appearance at the 2012 NBA/Sprite Slam Dunk Showdown (part of All-Star Weekend prior to the 61st All-Star Game) Feb. 25 in Orlando, Fla.

He capped it off with what’s known as one of his “signature” jams: As SunUte Community Center Recreation Manager McKean Walton helped hype the IHS Gymnasium atmosphere up via the microphone, Dobbs lined up three volunteers — Lady Bobcat guards Nicole Burch and Sky Cotton, and boys’ assistant coach Trae Seibel — in a line down the

heart of the lane. Teeing the ball on top of Seibel’s hands, Dobbs then walked back to the three-point arc.

With his helpers unable to see his approach, the 6-foot-3 Dobbs dashed up from behind, took flight and the sphere at the same time, put it between his legs and into his right hand, and smashed home a wind-mill over all three to an eruption of applause.

Native American Basketball Invitational (NABII) ambassador, Nike N7 program promoter to Native American communities (he has Choctaw heritage through his father’s side), founder of the AzUprise Youth Foundation, and with hoop skills to pay bills (he is a father), the lesson learned to all observers was Kenny Dobbs himself: an it’s-never-too-late saga live and in the flesh, and clearly thankful to be so.

In ‘Above the Rim,’ the late rapper Tupac Shakur jabs at his on-screen brother: “Not even Nutso ever got that high! Least not playin’.”



photo Suzi Richards/SU Drum

A-Team remain unbeaten, concluding a successful basketball season



photos Joel Priest/Special to the Drum

IJHS A-team standout Wyatt Hayes (11) draws all but one of Bayfield’s boys on the court toward him, and alertly dishes out towards an incoming teammate during the Thursday, Feb. 9 clash between the local rival schools inside a capacity-packed IJHS Gymnasium. In their final home game this season, the Bobcats walloped the Wolverines 54-33 with Hayes’ 17 points leading the way. The Bobcats’ top team continued its unbeaten season with league wins Feb. 11 in Nucla — 41 to 27 over Dove Creek, and a thorough 51-10 thrashing of the host Mustang “Colts.” The junior-high season concluded late Saturday, Feb. 18, at the SJBL Tournament in Ouray.



IJHS C-teamer (above left) Jagur Velasco (41) fires up a jumper against Bayfield on Thursday, Feb. 9 during the youngest junior-high Bobcats’ final home game of 2012. IJHS fell 22-13 in the contest, but the program’s evening would quickly improve. IJHS B-teamer (above right) John Valdez (21) splits



two Bayfield Wolverines for a tough shot during Ignacio’s final home game of 2012 on Thursday, Feb. 9. In the second of three tilts with the local, albeit non-league rival, the Cats staged an exciting rally late but came up short, 35-30. The night’s main event, however, would reverse IJHS’ fortunes.